

Norton Goals for Voting Rights and Complete Home Rule- December 27, 2006

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Challenge New Democratic Congress to Act on Promises

Major Gains for D.C. in Lackluster 109th

Washington, D.C. - The Office of Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC) today released the Congresswoman's annual review and goals report to her constituents, detailing her accomplishments for the two-year 109th session of Congress which ended this month, and her major goals for the 110th Congress. Topping the list of victories was a strong vote supporting the D.C. voting rights bill in one committee, and mid-year budget autonomy. With Democrats set to take control of both houses, Norton will press early passage of the D.C. vote bill and will seek to complete the city's limited home rule begun 32 years ago, beginning with budget and legislative autonomy, and wholesale reform of the D.C. Charter.

Following four years of negotiation, the Congresswoman achieved a breakthrough on the House vote bill cosponsored with Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA), when the bill passed in the Government Reform Committee 29 to 4. Norton's lengthy negotiations on the key measures she secured were necessary to get floor consideration, including agreement by the Judiciary Committee, the committee of jurisdiction, to allow a vote there, and to assure bipartisan support. Although the Republican leadership declined to move the bill, the two Republican Utah Senators wrote Republican and Democratic leaders seeking passage on the Senate floor as soon as the House passed the bill, brightening prospects for passage in 2007.

Approval of Norton's Mid-year Budget Autonomy bill, offering the first freedom from the federal supplemental appropriations process, is the most important structural change for the city since passage of the Home Rule Act 32 years ago. The District can now spend its local funds annually without congressional approval, instead of returning mid-year as part of the federal appropriations supplement. Residents were relieved to get a two-year extension of Norton's \$5,000 homebuyer and business tax credits, as home prices continued to make affordable housing scarce and businesses delayed improvements, awaiting the credits. Passage of Norton's land bill transferring valuable federal land to D.C. to partially compensate for the costs created by the federally-imposed structural imbalance allows the city to build housing and other revenue generating facilities. Following passage of Norton's William B. Bryant U.S. Court Annex bill, the Congresswoman helped dedicate the new addition, named for the first African American Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who graduated from the D.C. Public Schools and went on to break racial barriers after practicing law in segregated D.C., where the professional bar excluded him because of race.

In addition to a House vote for D.C., Norton's top goals for the 110th Congress focus on completing the unfinished work of D.C.'s partial home rule that leaves significant self governing decisions still under Congress, with budget and legislative autonomy as her highest priorities. With Democrats in power in the House and Senate for the first time in 12 years, Norton will begin a complete overhaul of the D.C. Charter to remove the many matters that should not be in a chartering document and can only be changed by the Congress. Many provisions are redundant, obsolete, no longer necessary, or are ordinary legislative matters. Others violate home rule, some of them now found in the "Free and Equal D.C. Series," introduced in the 109th Congress and before.

Congresswoman Norton's deep concern that D.C. has the nation's highest HIV/AIDS rate has led her to make 2007 a year to raise awareness and mobilize residents for prevention and testing for HIV and AIDS, which have gripped the African American community here and nationally. She began in November with a D.C. Clergy Town Meeting on HIV/AIDS and will continue throughout 2007 with town meetings addressed to other major groups, focusing in turn on Black men, women and teens, and ending with an All-City Town Meeting on eliminating HIV/AIDS in D.C.

Brief descriptions of these and other goals and accomplishments follow.

2007 Goals

D.C. Voting Rights First

Norton and co-sponsor Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA) will re-introduce the Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act as their first bill of the 110th Congress. The Democratic Party, repeatedly in party platforms, in bills, and in countless statements and actions, have urged full voting rights for the tax paying citizens of the District of Columbia. The bill for the House vote offers less than the party has pushed and that residents are entitled to, but challenges Democrats to make good on at least part of their promise. Norton will seek early passage in the House of Representatives, the only house affected, following action on the six signature bills House members ran on and promised to deliver in the first 100 legislative hours of a Democratic Congress. However, the D.C. bill will not get through Congress without the Utah senators, and the Utah-D.C. link remains as essential to passage as ever, particularly to steering clear of "holds" and other Senate mechanisms often used to stop bills in the Senate. Fortunately both Utah senators went on record in the closing days of the 109th Congress, writing a strong letter to the Republican and Democratic leaders seeking passage as soon as the House passed the bill, and the rest of the Senate is likely to defer to the Utah senators under traditional notions of senatorial courtesy.

Norton to Use First Budget Autonomy Bill to Yield More

Heartened by achieving Mid-year Budget Autonomy this year, Norton will press the new Democratic Congress to pass her full D.C. Budget Autonomy Act to allow the District to spend its locally raised funds without sending its budget to the Congress. Next to statehood, city control over its own locally raised funds and budget without federal oversight is generally considered the most important of several home rule enhancement goals the District must seek. Norton got her full budget autonomy bill passed by a Republican Senate in December of 2003, increasing optimism that a Democratic Congress will pass the bill.

Legislative Autonomy Overdue

Norton will seek elimination of the seldom used congressional review or layover period for civil (30 days) and criminal (60 days) laws that results in months of delay because only legislative, not calendar days apply.

Although only a handful of laws have been overturned using the required "resolutions of disapproval," the Council is forced into a Byzantine quagmire of emergency and temporary bills to assure no gap in vital laws. The few bills overturned in the Republican Congress utilized attachments to D.C. appropriations, even though the District continued to needlessly use the complicated and defunct layover process from three decades ago.

Norton Wants Passage of "Free and Equal D.C. Series" to Eliminate Anti-Home Rule Measures

As Democrats assume control of Congress, Norton will seek passage of her "Free and Equal D.C. Series" of bills to begin the process of eliminating anti-home rule and redundant restrictions that deprive the city of equal treatment as an independent, self-governing jurisdiction. Even after the House vote bill is enacted, D.C. will continue to be subject to many federal laws that rob it of independence and retard its ability to manage efficiently. The most important in the series are the D.C. Budget Autonomy Act to allow the District's locally funded budget to become final without coming to Congress, and the D.C. Legislative Autonomy Act to eliminate congressional review that subjects the city to months of harmful delay before a D.C. bill becomes law. Other bills now in the Free and Equal D.C. Series include: the D.C. District Attorney Act to allow the city to elect its own criminal justice officer rather than falling under a U.S. attorney; the D.C. National Guard Equality Act to give the Mayor the same authority over the state Guard as governors; the D.C. Medicaid Reimbursement Act to require the federal government to assume the full 75% rather than the current 70% share of Medicaid costs, in line with New York City-the only other city that contributes to Medicaid, a state function; the D.C. Hatch Reform Act to allow D.C. to operate under a local Hatch Act like other jurisdictions rather than the federal act; the D.C. National Guard Retention and College Access Act to require the federal government to offer college tuition aid to Guard members as states do, in keeping with federal jurisdiction over the D.C. Guard; the D.C. U.S. Territories Circulating Quarter Dollar Program Act to provide for a circulating quarter dollar coin to honor the District of Columbia and territories; and a bill to permit statues honoring citizens of the District of Columbia to be placed in Statuary Hall of the Capitol building as the states are permitted to do.

Top to Bottom Home Rule Charter Reform

For the first time since passage in 1974 of the Home Rule Act, the Congresswoman will convene experts to assist her in a comprehensive review and revision of the Act. The Act is replete with provisions that range from anti-self-government to redundant sections. While in the minority, Norton changed or eliminated some of these provisions, but there are many more that should be altered on the basis of obsolescence or redundancy alone. With the first Democratic Congress in 12 years, however, Norton will file bills for several major revisions, including the budget and legislative autonomy bill that she has always introduced and other bills that meet universally accepted democratic self-government principles.

D.C. Federal Contribution Act - Key to Lowering D.C. Taxes and Preventing Fiscal Crisis

Norton will press the Congress to meet its obligation to correct the city's unique federally imposed structural imbalance by approving her \$800 million annual Fair Federal Compensation Act. The bill is particularly necessary, given the federal court ruling this year against a D.C. commuter tax. Lacking a federal contribution, District taxpayers pay the costs associated with federal employees and other federal mandates, in effect, subsidizing the federal government. District taxpayers offset the structural deficit or shortfall through one of the highest U.S. tax rates, an unsustainable burden. Norton's success in getting passage of a land transfer bill this year in partial payment of the structural imbalance and in getting all regional members of the House to cosponsor the bill indicate substantial progress.

New and Improved D.C. Tax Credits

Following her success in getting renewal of D.C.'s vital tax credits this year, Norton will raise the ante by introducing the District of Columbia Tax Incentives Improvement Act to seek additional and more tailored relief. The bill will build on her federal tax incentives that have replenished D.C.'s residential and business tax base, reversing a dangerous downward spiral of several decades. However, the District's Chief Financial Officer says this growth cannot continue without continuing stimuli, particularly considering that the District has no state funds upon which to rely. Norton's bill makes important changes to match the city's new economy. Her bill would raise the \$5,000 homebuyer credit, now valuable regardless of purchase price or neighborhood, to \$10,000 to help meet sharply increased home prices that are out of reach for many lower and middle income residents; target new neighborhoods for the business tax credits; and extend the expiration date to 2009, the same date tax credits for other jurisdictions expire.

Remove Oppressive Anti-Home Rule Riders

Norton will ask the new Democratic majority to eliminate odious D.C. appropriation riders that nullify home rule against the explicit wishes of D.C. residents and elected officials. Among the most offensive are attachments that bar the District from spending locally raised funds for a needle exchange program, a rider that contributes significantly to D.C.'s high HIV/AIDS rate, and for abortions for poor women; and another prohibiting the use of local money to finance lobbying for voting rights.

109th Victories and Accomplishments

House Vote Bill-Almost

During four years of negotiations with both Republicans and Democrats, Norton worked with Government Reform Committee Chair Tom Davis (R-VA) and voting rights advocates to score a historic House victory as the D.C. Fair and Equal House Voting Rights Act passed in the Government Reform Committee 29 to 4, with an almost equal number of Republicans and Democrats voting "yea." In May, Norton achieved several milestones that were vital to passage, particularly a written promise for a mark-up in the Judiciary Committee, the committee of jurisdiction, without which the bill could not go to the floor. Even after Utah officials drew a redistricting map satisfactory to all, they were disappointed when Republican leaders declined to move the bill to the floor during the lame duck session. However, there was good news when the two Utah senators, along with Sen. Joe Lieberman (I-CT) (the original sponsor of the Norton bill that includes two senators for D.C.) wrote Republican and Democratic leaders seeking Senate passage immediately upon House action. Norton said that the support of the Utah senators almost certainly assures Senate passage because only Utah is affected and senatorial courtesy generally means deferring to that state's senators. She and Davis will re-introduce the House vote bill, which the new Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) has co-sponsored, in the Democratic-controlled 110th Congress and will press for the early passage.

D.C. Mid-year Budget Autonomy Bill First Major Home Rule Gain in 32 Years

Norton got passage of D.C.'s first budget autonomy legislation, a Mid-year Budget Autonomy provision for the District, allowing the city to spend local funds without returning to Congress for approval in the mid-year supplemental appropriations process. This provision, the first significant expansion of the Home Rule Act since its passage in 1973, paves the way for full budget autonomy, a Norton priority for the coming session. Norton regards review by Congress of D.C.'s locally raised budget as a fundamental denial of the city's right to self-determination, particularly mid-year, when permission had to be sought to spend local revenue already in the bank.

Renewed D.C. -Only Tax Credits for D.C. Homebuyers and Businesses

Norton successfully fought the Administration's attempt to exclude her D.C.-only \$5,000 homebuyer and business tax incentives from a national package of tax cuts passed this year. The credits are now available through 2007 and are retroactive for all of 2006. These incentives are credited with stabilizing the city's population and business base by stemming decades of economy-starving taxpayer flight, but Norton argued that they continued to be necessary to assure the permanent stability of a city without a state with revenue stream. The credits became a magnet for D.C. renters to buy here instead of fleeing to the suburbs, and for businesses to both remain and come to the District because the D.C. tax incentives are unavailable in the suburbs. One of the most important business incentives in the bill is the wage credit for every D.C. resident employed or hired. The wage credit has encouraged employers both to hire D.C. resident applicants and to remain in the city. Ironically, D.C. has maintained and increased its job base because of the stability of federal jobs and of the tourist economy generated by the federal presence, but the much larger regional population overwhelms the pool of D.C. job applicants, making the wage credit incentive particularly important.

Land Transfer Bill to Bring New Housing and Facilities is a Partial Federal Payment for D.C.'s Structural Imbalance

Passage this year of the Federal and D.C. Government Real Property Act, Norton's land transfer bill, introduced with Davis, transfers valuable federal land to the District, including Poplar Point; Reservation 13, where D.C. General Hospital is located; and several other valuable Anacostia waterfront sites. The bill partially meets Norton's goal to obtain a federal contribution to compensate the District for the structural imbalance, documented in a 2003 report by the General Accountability Office to be between \$470 million and \$1.1 billion and to be exclusively derived from federal mandates. The annual revenue generated from the development of the land will help compensate the city for federal mandates, such as the federal ban on taxing commuters and federal removal from the tax rolls of more than 40% of the District's best land.

D.C.'s Reserve Funds Freed

For the first time since the Control Board period, Norton was able to free funds from D.C.'s growing emergency and contingency reserve funds, provided they are reimbursed. Norton achieved success after repeated attempts to get Congress to relax uniquely strict limitations that kept large amounts of these funds accumulating and inaccessible, regardless of need.

Stopped Gun Law Repeal-Again

The National Rifle Association tried and failed for the fourth time to repeal D.C.'s gun safety laws. Norton had to beat two different and separate measures that threatened to bring more guns to D.C. streets-a bill for total repeal of D.C.'s handgun laws that she worked successfully to block on the House floor, and a weaker rider to allow shotguns and rifles that the House passed but Norton successfully eliminated by working in the Senate.

40% Increase in Transportation Funds

Norton overcame threats to D.C.'s per capita funding in the reauthorized transportation bill (SAFETEA-LU) to maintain the city's top ranked funding per capita. Despite many cuts in the long delayed bill, D.C. received a 40% increase over the last reauthorization, and Norton also was able to secure millions of dollars for extra projects as a senior member of the Transportation Committee.

Norton Gets Capitol Police Help During Crime Emergency

Norton broke another barrier to get Capitol Police crime-fighting assistance on the Mall, which is under federal, not local jurisdiction, following five assaults on residents and tourists at the height of the summer tourist season. Consequently, Park Police, who also patrol city parks because they are federally controlled, were able to resume their patrols of Anacostia, Fort Dupont, Rock Creek and other D.C. parks, and the surrounding neighborhoods during the city's crime emergency. In short order, Capitol Police assistance helped return the Mall to its usual crime-free condition, reassuring residents and tourists, the linchpin of D.C.'s local economy. All of the assailants were quickly captured and are now serving sentences. The assaults occurred where there was poor lighting. In anticipation of the coming spring cherry blossom tourist season, Norton recently wrote the National Park Service requesting an inventory of all the lighting on the Mall and cross streets to address outages and tree branches that block lighting, and the development of a system for

assuring that these vital steps occur automatically. In addition, Norton wrote that upgrading all Mall lighting is necessary because existing lighting is too dark to assure safety.

Coast Guard Headquarters Will Spur Ward 8 Commercial Development

After decades of holding the St. Elizabeth's west campus, the Administration finally designated the site for the Homeland Security headquarters, beginning with the Coast Guard use. The construction of the Coast Guard headquarters will be historic because it marks the first time the federal government has brought development east of the Anacostia River. Norton believes that the major federal construction will stimulate long sought development along the Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, as federal construction has spurred development elsewhere in the city and nationally.

First Federal Racial Profiling Law

Norton got her racial profiling provision included in the reauthorized transportation bill. Her provision, the first in federal law, uses federal funding as an incentive for states and localities to enact and enforce local racial profiling laws.

Norton Secure TRAINS Amendments Move

Spurred by concern for Metro, rail, and Union Station security, as well as the refusal of the federal government to reroute toxic cargo freight, Norton, a member of the Homeland Security Committee, has become the congressional lead on public transportation security and the lead sponsor of the Secure TRAINS Act. As Minority Leader, Nancy Pelosi appeared with Norton and the leadership of the committee at a press conference reintroducing the Act, to signal that the bill was a major Democratic priority. There are nine billion passenger trips in the United States annually. Two important

amendments from the Norton bill were adopted as part of the Homeland Security reauthorization bill in 2005. They require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop security best practices for use by mass transportation operators and a national plan for passenger and employee awareness to prevent and respond to terrorist acts on public transportation. Norton has criticized the Administration and Congress for failing to act, even after the Madrid and London attacks demonstrated that terrorists appear to have moved their primary focus from air travel to public transportation. Norton also got an amendment added to the science and technology security bill. The Norton amendment is the first research and development provision dedicated exclusively to rail and mass transportation security, necessary, she said, because of the disparity between security funds spent on aviation security-\$9 per air passenger-and the one penny spent per ground passenger, almost none of it on research and development.

House Moves Anacostia River Amendments

An important section of Norton's comprehensive bill to clean up the Anacostia River was passed by the House in the Water Resources Development Act. The Norton amendment requires the Army Corps of Engineers to coordinate regional development of a 10-year comprehensive action plan for restoration of the Anacostia and its tributaries. Norton seized the opportunity to press forward this section of her Anacostia bill in the Water Resources Committee on which she serves. The Maryland, Virginia and the District joint action on a single plan, and on local funding as addressed in the bill is the predicate for the \$250 million authorization in the Norton bill. Combined sewer overflow is a major cause of Anacostia pollution, and its remediation is an important part of the bill.

Norton Bill Gets National Open to Small Planes

General aviation (charter and small plane service) was resumed at Reagan National Airport, implementing a Norton bill, passed as part of the Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization. Norton recruited the leadership of the Transportation Committee to continue the fight when the Bush administration initially ignored her amendment. National was the only airport in the country where full service had not been restored after 9/11. Norton, the only regional member of the Aviation Subcommittee, was particularly concerned about the effects on the D.C. and regional economy.

Norton Appointed to Leadership Truth Squad

As the 109th Congress closed, Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi appointed Congresswoman Norton to a leadership "Truth Squad" of six members to expose unusually large and systemic contractor abuses, fraud, wasteful procurement practices, and excessive spending by the Bush Administration and the Republican Congress. The Truth Squad report found that the Iraq War and Hurricane Katrina sole source contracts and other non-competitive practices have wasted billions of tax dollars.

Action to End War and International Instability

Norton took several steps to engage the Iraq War and the most unstable international situation in decades. She became a cosponsor of the Murtha Resolution for redeployment from Iraq, had a Speak-out of Residents Without a Vote on the War and the Nation's Spending Priorities, and conducted a survey of residents that showed that more than half wanted withdrawal of U.S. troops at the earliest possible date and that they had selected Medicaid as their top spending priority. To support the D.C. National Guard, Norton spoke to soldiers and their families each time units were deployed and returned. She worked with the Guard to bring soldiers to her annual tax fair for free tax services, to inform soldiers of many free tax services available here, and to help them steer clear of commercial up front withholding payments, which in fact are high interest loans. To help end genocidal war in Darfur, Norton was arrested at the Sudanese Embassy, as she was when she and three others initiated the South Africa sit-ins that led to U.S. sanctions. Norton also asked D.C. to divest from Darfur.

After Katrina, Norton Works to Restore FEMA to Cabinet Level

After the tragic debacle of the federal response to Hurricane Katrina, Norton, in her role as ranking member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee with jurisdiction over FEMA, along with the Republican and Democratic leadership of the Committee, introduced the Restoring Emergency Services to Protect Our Nation from Disasters (RESPOND) Act. The RESPOND Act would restore FEMA to an independent, cabinet-level agency and require that its director be qualified with extensive experience in emergency disasters, among other vital provisions.

Norton Asks D.C. Clergy Town Meeting to Lead D.C. HIV/AIDS Campaign

In November, Norton began a year long series of five town meetings that will run through 2007 to engage residents to take the steps necessary to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS in D.C., which has the highest rate of infections in the United States. At her Clergy Town Meeting on HIV/AIDS, ministers from several denominations accepted Norton's challenge to assume leadership of a citizens' campaign to drive HIV/AIDS from D.C. through safe sex, testing and other preventive measures. The clergy's response was enthusiastic and innovative, including suggestions for a Citywide Clergy Testing event to eliminate all stigmas; devoting all or part of regular services every month to preventing HIV/AIDS; and providing testing at churches after services. Norton and her Congressional Black Caucus colleagues were tested on the Capitol grounds to encourage African Americans, who are now the majority with the virus, to be tested (See Congresswoman Norton being tested at <http://www.norton.house.gov/>.)

Dedication Follows Norton Bill Naming U.S. Court Annex for Pioneering Black Judge

Norton helped dedicate the new U.S. courthouse annex after successfully waging a two year battle to name the annex for Judge William B. Bryant, the first African American to serve as Chief Judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, and the first African American Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia. A graduate of the D.C. Public Schools and first in his class at Howard University, Judge Bryant became one of the city's most outstanding lawyers while practicing law in segregated D.C. in the 1940s and 1950s, when African Americans could not join the D.C. Bar Association or use its library. Norton got the bill through the House easily, but had to overcome Senate objections against naming a building for a living person. That objection was finally overcome for Bryant as it had been for others. Judge Bryant died shortly after the bill passed.

Norton Bills Seek to Relieve D.C.'s Worst Health Problems

Congresswoman Norton focused on three health problems - AIDS, obesity, and prostate cancer - where D.C.'s health statistics are particularly acute and where federal aid exists or is possible. The reluctance of residents to be tested for

HIV/AIDS led Norton to introduce a tuition loan forgiveness bill for dental graduates, similar to match federal loan repayment for physicians and nurses, in order to address a sharply diminishing supply of dentists in the U.S., particularly dentists who serve people with HIV/AIDS and lower income people. Norton believes the bill could help uncover the disease for many who are reluctant to be tested, inasmuch as oral health problems are early indicators and important benchmarks for HIV. Norton continued to emphasize the obesity crisis here and nationally by introducing the Children's Health FTC Authority Restoration Act to restore Federal Trade Commission authority to regulate marketing to children under 18. Ads for junk food directed at kids have contributed to a national upsurge in childhood obesity and conditions such as diabetes. The Administration and Congress allowed funding to lapse for a major childhood obesity bill cosponsored with a former Republican member of Congress. Norton introduced the Prostate Cancer Medicaid Coverage Act to allow treatment of low-income men diagnosed with prostate

cancer through federal screenings, just as treatment is allowed for low-income women who have breast cancer. The District has the highest U.S. prostate cancer incidence and death rates. At a hearing on the D.C. Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Administration, Norton focused on congressional failure to fund a low-cost Superior Court Family Division program using volunteers whose regular visits to clients, she said, are the best hope for preventing the abuse and deaths for which MRDDA has been criticized. Norton will seek these funds next year.

Home of Black Scholar Who Originated Black History Month Becomes

Official National Park Service Site

The National Park Service accepted ownership of the Carter G. Woodson Home after purchase from the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH). Norton introduced the first bill to make the Woodson home, located in the historic Shaw neighborhood, one of only 389 sites in the National Park System, an honor available only for the most historic U.S. sites. When completed, the home will be maintained as a national tourist site, honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the scholar who created the annual observance now known as Black History Month. ASALH also will have a location there, as it did when Woodson founded and operated the organization. Norton has vigorously pursued the bill and funding also because the Woodson home is likely to become another important tourist destination.

Norton Gets Committee Hearings on Homeland Security D.C. Cuts

After the National Capital Region received a surprising \$30 million cut in homeland security funds, the Homeland Security Committee, on which Norton serves, heard testimony from Mayor Anthony Williams and New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, explaining the effect of the cuts on the nation's two highest risk jurisdictions. Norton also got a similar hearing in the Government Reform Committee, where she continued to question Department of Homeland Security officials about the effect of the security cuts on the federal presence and residents of the city and region. Through the hearings, Norton and others were able to uncover flaws in the DHS formula process, which she will attempt to remedy as Democrats take control in the new term.

Norton Leads Rosa Parks Honors

Norton worked with members of the Congressional Black Caucus to give civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks the honor of being the first woman to lie in honor in the Capitol Rotunda, and then was invited to preside at the Memorial Service for Ms. Parks at the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church. In her nationally-televised remarks, the Congresswoman spoke of Ms. Parks' gift of non-violent protest, especially to "the residents of the District of Columbia, who still feed from her inspiration to achieve equality with other Americans, including equal voting rights in the Congress."

Norton Congressional Resolution Honors First D.C. Teacher to Get National Honor

Congresswoman Norton introduced separate congressional resolutions recognizing two outstanding District of Columbia Public Schools teachers. Jason Kamras of Sousa Middle School, the 2005 D.C. Teacher of the Year, was the first D.C. educator to be named as the prestigious National Teacher of the Year. Kim Burke-Ables of Benjamin Banneker Academic High School was the District of Columbia Teacher of the Year for 2006.

Reducing Hill Oversight and Gaining Efficiency with D.C. Omnibus Bill

Congress passed Norton's second Omnibus Authorization Act, consisting mainly of important laws approved by the Council that also need congressional passage, usually because of charter requirements, as well as some federal provisions. Although only Congress may pass charter provisions, Norton requires prior approval by D.C. before she will sponsor such provisions to respect home rule. Most of the bills are necessary and important for D.C. operations and should not require additional congressional consideration. The Omnibus bill is a significant breakthrough in efficiency for often redundant requirements, and is part of the Congresswoman's larger vision to update and reform the District charter process. The provisions are described below:

Emergency authority for the D.C. courts to conduct affairs outside the District. D.C. courts are given the authority to conduct business outside D.C. in the event of an emergency. Norton, a member of the Homeland Security Committee, said the threat to the nation's capital requires this change for continuing criminal and civil court operations. New public school fiscal year. This provision grants a change in the D.C. public schools fiscal year to run July 1 - June 30 to conform to the school year instead of the October 1 - September 30 federal fiscal year. Metered taxicabs at the discretion of the Mayor. This provision requires metered taxicabs licensed in the District, but in order to preserve home rule, Norton negotiated a provision authorizing the Mayor to opt out by issuing an executive order. Permanently authorizing the District CFO. This provision makes permanent the D.C. Chief Financial Officer, including responsibilities and a term of five years, and establishes the duties and responsibilities of the D.C. Treasurer, an officer authorized by the charter. Personnel authority for the CFO. This provision provides independent personnel authority for the D.C. Chief Financial Officer. Procurement authority for the CFO. This provision provides procurement authority for the CFO. Fiscal impact statements. This section requires that all legislation passed by the D.C. Council be accompanied by a fiscal impact statement. Public school employees negotiation process. This provision exempts the evaluation process and instruments for evaluating DCPS employees from collective bargaining. Exemption of District employees from federal civil service laws. This provision permanently exempts District government employees from federal personnel laws and applies the District's own pay provisions to all its employees. D.C. Public Defender Service. The costs of the Public Defender Service (PDS) were assumed by the federal government under the 1997 Revitalization Act that relieved D.C. of some costs in order to permit the city to emerge from insolvency. Because of PDS's mixed status as a federally funded, independent agency of the District of Columbia, the General Services Administration needed the legal authority to enter into leases for PDS, as it does for federal agencies. Acceptance of gifts and fees by CSOSA and PDS. This provision authorizes the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency, for fiscal years 2006 through 2008, to accept gifts of space and training to support offender and defendant programs, and the Public Defender Service to charge fees to cover the costs of materials distributed to attendees of educational events (also for FY06-08). Enhanced D.C. court employee health benefits. This provision extends federal enhanced dental and vision benefits to D.C. court employees, who come under federal jurisdiction. Register of wills modernization. This provision enables the D.C. courts to integrate information technology into their administrative services by removing outdated mandates such as the requirement that the courts maintain records in "strong bound books." Pay cap for non-judicial court employees. This provision increases the pay rate cap for non-judicial employees to enable the courts to implement a performance management system. Services of investigators. This provision provides a technical change to the statute governing the rate of pay available for individuals providing services to indigent defendants by applying the \$25 per hour pay cap to only investigator services rather than to experts and other service providers. Criteria for renewing or extending sole source contracts. This provision stipulates that during fiscal years 2006 through 2008, a noncompetitively bid contract cannot be renewed or extended unless the CFO determines that the contract was renewed or extended in accordance with duly promulgated rules and procedures. IDEA attorneys. This provision requires the CFO to establish practices to enhance the transparency of the disclosure processes for attorneys in special education processes. Annual independent audit standards. This section clarifies, for fiscal years 2006 through 2008, the requirements of the annual independent audit conducted by the District's Inspector General. Library gifts. This provision allows the District's public libraries to accept and use a gift or donation upon approval by the Mayor, who previously was the only official who could receive them. Acceptance of grants. This section authorizes the Mayor to accept, obligate and expend federal, private or other grants received by the District, as reflected in the District's budget as approved by Congress, provided that certain reporting requirements are met. Interstate insurance compact authority. This provision authorizes the District to enter into an interstate insurance compact, in order to more clearly establish the District's ability to do so, although it is not a state. Use of fines imposed for violation of alcohol traffic laws. This provision requires fines collected for violation of alcohol traffic laws to be transferred to the District's general fund for enforcement and prosecution of such laws.